

VZCZCXRO9946
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHLU #0330/01 1001536
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 101536Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY LUANDA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3855
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LUANDA 000330

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

1E. O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL AO
SUBJECT: ANGOLA: FEBRUARY - MARCH POLITICAL ROUNDUP

REFS: (A) LUANDA 06 01196
(B) LUANDA 06 01305

11. (U) SUMMARY

- PADEPA Activists Acquitted
- FNLA Founder Retires
- UNITA Loses Five Deputies, Commemorates Savimbi's Death
- MPLA Parliamentarian Denounces Lack of Freedom of Expression
- MPLA President Accuses Party Dissidents of Spreading Lies

PADEPA Activists Acquitted

12. (U) Eight PADEPA opposition party members were acquitted on March 2, 2007 by the provincial Court of Luanda after having been arrested and charged by the police with inciting the public by distributing inflammatory pamphlets on February 19, 2007. The activists were granted bail by the court on February 23, 2007 after the public prosecutor told the judge that the police had erred, citing that pamphlet distribution is not a crime in Angola.

13. (SBU) Comment: PADEPA members have been arrested and charged in court five times in the last three years for holding anti-government public protests or distributing pamphlets. Their score card is currently three acquittals and two sentences. The sentences were against the party Secretary General for contempt of court in November 2006, which was commuted into a three thousand dollar fine (see reftels) and the Party Political Secretary, who spent forty-five days in jail for disrupting a parliamentary session in 12005. PADEPA currently holds no seats in Parliament but consistently has been exceptionally outspoken.

FNLA Founder Retires

14. (SBU) On March 17, FNLA founder and President Holden Roberto formally retired from active politics at age 84. The combination of Mr. Roberto's poor health, internal dissidence, and financial constraints has crippled the FNLA, once the third most powerful player on the Angolan political scene, in recent years. The main candidates to succeed Mr. Roberto as party president are 1st Party Secretary Lucas Ngonda, Roberto favorite and 2nd Party Secretary

SIPDIS
Ngola Kabango, and long-time senior party members Carlinho Zassala and Pinto Joao.

UNITA Loses Five Deputies in Parliament

15. (U) Parliament, by administrative order, has ruled on the longstanding struggle between renegade UNITA deputies and UNITA leadership. The Parliament accepted and upheld the request presented by the five UNITA Deputies to become "independent," thus reducing UNITA's representation in Parliament from seventy to

sixty-five deputies. The five were expelled from UNITA in July 2006 after they publicly denounced the party leadership and refused to resign their seats to make way for new deputies of UNITA's choosing.

The expelled Deputies have promised to continue defending the interests of UNITA in Parliament, but said they will not defend the interests of the party's current leadership, whom they claim is misguiding the party. Nonetheless, they insist that they still belong to the greater UNITA family. However, most Parliamentary observers see this pledge as pure rhetoric and believe the Deputies will vote with the MPLA bench.

Five Years without Jonas Savimbi

¶6. (U) On February 22, UNITA commemorated the fifth anniversary of the death of its founder, Jonas Savimbi. While speaking to the press after a memorial service in honor of Savimbi, UNITA Secretary General Mario Vatuva promised that UNITA will do everything possible to have the late Savimbi's body exhumed from his current grave in Luena, Moxico and reburied in his hometown of Andulo, Bie. Since 2003, UNITA has repeatedly expressed the wish to honor its founder with a formal burial ceremony and memorial, but Angolan law forbids exhumations prior to five years after the initial interment. Vatuva affirmed that UNITA has completed the legal paperwork to exhume Savimbi's remains.

¶7. (SBU) UNITA President Isaias Samakuva used the occasion to declare that democracy was being smothered by the MPLA and attitudes reminiscent of the Party-State days were becoming frequent again. Further attempting to position itself as the defender of democracy, UNITA's Permanent Committee strongly objected to the detention of Global Witness activist Dr. Sarah Wykes, considering it anti-democratic and condemned the police agents who on February 22 destroyed posters announcing memorial activities for Savimbi.

MPLA Parliamentarian Denounces Lack of Freedom of Expression

LUANDA 00000330 002 OF 002

¶8. (U) MPLA Parliamentarian and journalist Joco Melo acknowledged the lack of freedom of expression in Angola during a lecture organized by the Namibe provincial government and the provincial journalist union in February. Melo made this statement in his keynote address on the role of journalists during the upcoming election campaign. Melo pointed out that although the Constitutional law upheld freedom of the press, self-censored communication smothered freedom of expression as people find themselves unable to express opinions or communicate their views for fear of being labeled sympathetic to a group and suffering the repercussions that follow.

¶9. Comment: The government-owned Jornal de Angola took strong exception to the 2006 U.S. Human Right Report's criticism of journalist self-censorship in Angola in an editorial by the Jornal's Director, Jose Ribeiro. Melo's lecture is therefore an interesting glimpse into an apparent internal MPLA debate on media roles. End Comment

MPLA President Accuses Party Dissidents of Spreading Lies

¶10. (SBU) February 9, MPLA President Jose Eduardo dos Santos addressed the MPLA Central Committee during the party's annual meeting. Dos Santos presented the 2006 balance sheets, which he called positive, praising the executive commission for its guidance. However, he then criticized and warned the "dissident voices" in the party to stop spreading false propaganda about the party. He accused the dissidents of trying to revive the old leftist MPLA with its socialist-dictatorial rule. Dos Santos called on all party militants to expose those dissident voices, who are diverging from the official party line. Dos Santos accused them of being "infiltrators intent on destabilizing and weakening the party," just as elections approach.

¶11. (SBU) Dos Santos said that the party leadership was united and

strong in its vision of "a government, by the people for the people." Dos Santos also strongly advised that the decision on the MPLA's presidential candidate only be discussed after the legislative elections.

EFIRD